

# Wildlife Diversity News

*A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program*

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Spring 2010

## Recognizing the Toad (and Frog) Tally-ers

Every year around this time I find myself forehead-deep in surveys and every year it teaches me to marvel at what amazing wildlife conservationists we have in Iowa. I coordinate several surveys for everything from bald eagles to American toads and a majority of the data that comes out of these surveys is collected by volunteers.

One of the most striking examples of the dedication of our wildlife volunteers is the Frog and Toad Call Survey run each summer. 2010 marks the 20th year this survey has been run and there are several volunteers that have been with the survey since the beginning or very close to it. It is no wonder that this group of volunteers were chosen in 2004 for the prestigious Director's Award honoring volunteers for outstanding service. Frog and Toad volunteers trek out for 1-4 hours on 3 nights each summer to listen for which frogs and toads are calling on their wetland route, and it's not always fun. Wildlife is very rarely cooperative and so a volunteer may go out to drive their route only to hear very little or nothing. And yet they continue to find the time and collect data year after year.

So I'd like to take a moment and recognize these amazing individuals (and couples!) and thank them for their dedication and service to

Iowa's wildlife. I hope I don't miss anyone (20 years is a long time to keep track!) and I hope all of you who participate in this survey know it could not be done without you and are having fun. So happy 20th birthday frog and toad survey and I hope all of our tally-ers continue to fill their summer nights with toad (and frog) song.



### **20 Years- Frogstastic Toad**

#### **Tappers**

Dave Bakke  
Ann and Kevin Burns  
Rita Efta  
Bruce Ehresman  
Eugenia Farrar  
Bill French  
Randy Robinson  
Tim Waltz

### **15 to 19 years - Ribbit**

#### **Wranglers Extraordinaire**

Carol Berrier (1996)  
Collette Broderson (1994)  
Sue Ross-Barta and Bob Barta (1996)  
Dan Cohen (1996)  
Anita DeKock (1995)  
Stewart Dalton (1996)  
Jane Hey (1993)  
Brad Kraayenbrink (1993)  
Joe Mahlberg (1993)  
Bruce and Georgeann Morrison (1994)  
Connie and Robert Mutel (1993)  
Michele Olson (1995)

Larry Reis (1993)  
James and Jean Sandroock (1995)  
Kent and Joy Sheeley (1994)  
Tex Sordahl (1992)  
Charlotte and Virgil Sorensen (1992)  
Virginia Walsh (1995)

### **10 to 14 Years - Friends of Kermit**

Richard Baker (2000)  
Karen Disbrow (1999)  
Marlene Ehresman (2000)  
Joan Felkner (1998)  
Ron and Carol Fullenkamp (1998)  
Donald and Mary Maze (1998)  
Jim Monagan (1998)

### **5 to 9 Years - Frog Toadalers**

Jon and Joyce Bahrenfus (2003)  
Dana Dettmer (2005)  
Heather Gamm (2002)  
Karen Juhl (2005)  
Mike Meetz (2006)  
Reba Reddick (2006)  
Lawrence Roesler (2005)

- Stephanie Shepherd  
Surveys & Data Coordinator

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Edited by: Jenni Dyar, AmeriCorps

## Notes from the Catbird Seat

If I could choose the best job in the world, I'd probably have to say it's the one I've enjoyed for the past 9+ years with the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program. But my prior 29 years as a DNR Wildlife Management Biologist might just end up in a photo finish for that "world's best job" designation. Partly it's because of all the incredibly talented and dedicated people comprising the entire Wildlife Bureau, and partly because there's nothing more satisfying than working with wildlife, whether conducting bird surveys, banding geese, restoring wetlands and prairies, or securing the funds needed to save a critical piece of habitat.

When first arriving in Iowa in January 1972, I thought, "Well, a couple of years experience here, then I'll head to bigger things, like managing mountain lions in Idaho." That didn't happen, and 38 years later there are absolutely no regrets. Iowa is a wonderful place to live and raise a family, and while the

natural wonders here might not be considered "majestic", our small, hidden gems are every bit as important to a healthy planet as are tall mountains and big, wild carnivores. What's more, conservation successes in a landscape as altered as Iowa's just may be more satisfying than similar progress in a more intact wild landscape.

At the end of May I'll clean out my desk and hang up my DNR cap for the last time. The Wildlife Diversity Program will be in the excellent hands of our experienced veterans, Bruce and Pat, and our energetic younger staff, Stephanie, Karen and Paul. In addition, current AmeriCorps members Jenni and Billy bring shorter-term but invaluable talents to the WDP team. Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Manager Katy Reeder, while not an "official" part of the WDP team, has a job closely allied to ours, and her assigned tasks will help guide *all* of DNR's wildlife programs into the future. These extremely dedicated people make it easy to leave with no concerns about the direction they will take the Wildlife Diversity Program--it's bound to get even better.

I won't fade into sunset completely, however. I intend to conduct volunteer bird monitoring and Breeding Bird Atlas work for the WDP team, and I'll also continue as Iowa Coordinator for the national (USGS) Breeding Bird Survey. This will allow the luxury of doing the really "fun stuff" (birding, etc.) without having to worry about budgets, report deadlines, and other not-so-fun administrative duties. And, I plan to devote more time to helping Iowa Audubon raise its level of recognition as a bigger NGO "player" in the business of bird conservation and education.

Following the example of DNR Director Rich Leopold, I'll close with a short quote, this from Minnesota humorist, nature writer and lecturer, Al Batt: "Look at birds like there is a reward. There is." Substitute any wild creature you like in that quote, because they all bring great rewards. So long, and hope to see you when I'm out birding!

- Doug Harr  
Wildlife Diversity Program  
Coordinator

## Southern Wings Taking Flight



The DNR Wildlife Diversity Program is currently reviewing projects to determine how and where to spend its first annual \$5000 contribution to the new *Southern Wings* program (see spring 2009 issue of *Wildlife Diversity News*). Spearheaded by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, this effort matches contributions from several states' nongame programs with partner dollars from American Bird Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and other NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Funds will go to bird and habitat conservation and education projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, benefiting Neotropical migrants that spend the summer in Iowa or elsewhere in North America but winter in the tropics. Top project sites being considered by Iowa DNR include Costa Rica's bird-rich Osa Peninsula, grassland bird habitat in central Mexico, and cerulean warbler habitat in Columbia. The new logo pictured here and designed by Adam Oswald of South Dakota's Game, Fish & Parks Dept., has just been unveiled.



### Iowa's Teaming With Wildlife Coalition

Over 230 groups working together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

## Diversity Dispatch

### Breaking News in the Wide World of Wildlife

#### **State of the Birds 2010 focuses on climate change**

Climate change is putting pressure on hundreds of species of migratory birds, already stressed by habitat loss, competition from invasive species and exposure to toxic chemicals, a new U.S. government report concludes. In part to meet their needs for protection, the Department of the Interior is laying the groundwork for a network of science-based landscape conservation cooperatives. "The State of the Birds: 2010 Report on Climate Change" indicates that the warming climate will have an increasingly disruptive effect on bird species in all habitats, with oceanic and Hawaiian birds in greatest danger. "Just as they did in 1962 when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, our migratory birds are sending us a message about the health of our planet," said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, releasing the report on March 11. (Read the entire report at: <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>) An earlier report from the National Wildlife Federation and American Bird Conservancy indicates at least 20 species of migratory birds in North America are arriving 21 days earlier in spring than they did in the 1960s. That report also projects that American goldfinches (Iowa's official state bird) may someday no longer nest in Iowa, if average annual temperatures continue creeping up at current rates. In the meantime, southern species like the scissor-tailed flycatcher (Oklahoma's state bird) are expanding their range into Missouri and could be headed for Iowa.



#### **Bird-killing pesticides meet the end of the line**

In September 2009, the EPA announced that two toxic pesticides, disulfoton and methamidophos, have been voluntarily removed from the US market by manufacturer Bayer CropScience. These organophosphates, in granulated form, can cause direct mortality when eaten by birds while feeding on seeds, berries or insects, or result in secondary poisoning when birds of prey feed on contaminated rodents. Sub-lethal effects include altered breeding behavior and other neurological effects. In December, carbofuran--perhaps the most bird-toxic pesticide available--was dealt a near-death blow by EPA and a US Federal Court, which ordered cancellation of its license. Manufacturer FMC has one more chance in court this year, but it's likely any appeal will be met by a continued ban of the product. Carbofuran is estimated to have killed a minimum of 2 million birds annually in the U.S.



Photo by Doug Harr

#### **Chickadee "packs"?**

Did you know that black-capped chickadees in a neighborhood or local woodland are organized in a wolf-like society? Alpha females pair with Alpha males, and so on down the line. If one of a pair dies or disappears, the next ranking male or female moves up the social ladder, as does each bird below it. But if the missing mate returns some time later, he or she resumes its old status and replacements are kicked back down to their former level. Females will also "divorce" a mate in a gold-digger's attempt to find a male of higher social prominence. And we all thought they looked so sweetly innocent!

#### **Recommended reading**

One of the best avian natural history books to come along recently is *The Bird* (Crown Publishers, 2008), by British science writer Colin Tudge. A former features editor for *New Science* and documentarian for BBC, Tudge has created what might even be useful as a basic ornithology text, but in a manner so entertainingly readable that it's hard to put down. He discusses how birds came to be, covers each of the world's bird orders and their changing dynamics as DNA analysis discovers new links and breaks old ones, their fascinating eating and mating habits (see Chickadee "packs", above), and much more. This is a "must read" for every bird enthusiast.





## Breeding Bird Atlas: Spring into Action!

Spring is definitely here! It seems that everyday I notice a new bird species arriving from warmer climates. Some birds are just passing through as they travel to their nesting grounds in the north, but many are moving back to Iowa because they favor the rich productivity of the Midwest. By mid-April, almost 60 species will already be displaying various breeding behaviors and by mid-May the number will be more than 130. In other words, now is the time to begin collecting data for Iowa's 2<sup>nd</sup> Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA). The BBA is a five-year project that started in 2008 and continues through 2012, where volunteers search for evidence of birds nesting throughout the state. This information will be used by biologists, landowners, and the public to enhance our understanding of these species, their breeding range, and their habitat preferences.

Statewide, volunteers have logged over 3,400 hours of observation, visited 667 blocks, and recorded 190 species. We are making good progress, but with only 24 blocks completed we have a long way to go to reach our goals. This year we should aim to re-visit the 570 blocks with less than 10 hours of recorded effort. It is also essential to put effort into the 124 blocks that have not yet been

visited. Everyone is invited to participate regardless of previous birding experience, and with 791 survey blocks around the state there are bound to be some close to where you live.

Currently, the blocks with the most recorded species are as follows:

1. North Ames/Ames High Prairie, Story Co. (123 species)
2. Ledges State Park, Boone Co. (116)
3. Chichaqua Bottoms North, Polk Co. (110)
4. Whiterock Conservancy, Guthrie Co. (106)
5. Big Marsh East, Butler Co. (101)

Keep in mind that while the total number of species in a block is important, it is also crucial to ensure good coverage by visiting as many square-mile sections in a block as possible. Similarly, a confirmed record is more valuable than a probable, possible, or observed account, so aim to upgrade evidence codes as the opportunity arises. Also, please remember to enter your data if you haven't already, or mail it to me and I can do it for you. This data is critical for the conservation and management of Iowa's wonderful birdlife.

This spring and summer, the Iowa Ornithologists' Union and Iowa DNR will be hosting three BBA Blockbusting Weekends around the state. Each weekend will begin with a presentation about the BBA on Friday evening. Volunteers will learn how to participate, how to determine breeding bird status, and how to turn in observations. During Saturday and Sunday, volunteers will be out in blocks searching for nesting birds. Come out and join us for a few hours or the whole weekend! For more information on the blockbusting weekends and atlas, or to view up-to-date progress, either contact me or check out the website at: <http://bba.iowabirds.org>. I can't wait to see what we accomplish this year. Happy Birding!

- Billy Reiter-Marolf, AmeriCorps  
BBA Volunteer Coordinator  
Office: (515) 432-2823 x117  
Cell: (515) 298-3072  
[bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org](mailto:bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org)



Piping Plover

Photo by US Fish & Wildlife Service

For more information and to join the effort, go to:  
<http://bba.iowabirds.org/>

## 2010 BBA Blockbusting Weekends

### Burlington/Muscatine

Fri. May 21 @ 7 PM - BBA Presentation & Training at Unitarian-Universalist Meeting House, 625 N. 6th Street, Burlington, Iowa  
Sat. May 22 & Sun. May 23 - Birding in Des Moines, Louisa & Muscatine Co.

### Clinton/Dubuque

Friday June 18 @ 7 PM - BBA Presentation & Training at Bickelhaupt Arboretum, 340 South 14th St., Clinton, Iowa  
Sat. June 19 & Sun. June 20 - Birding in Clinton, Dubuque & Jackson Co.

### Lake Red Rock

Friday, July 9 @ 9 PM - BBA Presentation & Training at North Overlook Amphitheater, just off County Hwy T-15 north of the dam, Lake Red Rock, Iowa  
Sat. July 10 & Sun. July 11 - Birding in Marion & Warren Co.

## Spring Cleaning: Feeder Edition

Every year during the transition from winter to spring, our office receives numerous calls from the public reporting dead and dying birds around their bird feeders. With the recent increase in temperature and already high amount of moisture, conditions are ripe for the growth of mold, fungus, and bacteria and the consequent spread of infectious diseases. This is especially true around feeders where birds congregate and their feces and waste seed have been allowed to accumulate.

The two most prevalent diseases that affect birds at feeders are Salmonellosis and Aspergillosis. Of the two, Salmonellosis is most prevalent, since it occurs in bird feces. Reports of as many as 30 dead birds at a time are typically associated with salmonella outbreaks. Salmonellosis is primarily transmitted by fecal contamination of food and water by sick birds, but it also can spread by bird-to-bird contact. Aspergillosis is a fungal disease and mold infection that affects the respiratory system of birds (and humans). A bird becomes infected by ingestion or inhalation of mold spores

of contaminated foods, especially moldy peanuts or corn. Nearly all species of birds may be affected.

To keep your birds healthy, keep their feeders and feeding areas clean. Do this by regular removal of old food and by cleaning away waste food and feces beneath feeders. Also, clean and disinfect your bird feeder often. Liquid chlorine household bleach makes a good, cheap disinfectant. Mix one part bleach with nine parts water, which gives a 10 % solution. After a good scrub, rinse your bird feeder and let it dry thoroughly. Store bird food in a cool area, and place it in rodent- and water-proof containers. Discard any food that smells musty, is wet, looks moldy, or has fungus growing on it. Contaminated storage containers and scoops that held spoiled food need to be cleaned, too. Be sure to wear rubber gloves while cleaning the feeders, since humans can contract some diseases, such as those



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Rose-breasted Grosbeak (male)

caused by some *Salmonella* bacteria, from affected feeders or sick birds.

Maintaining a healthy environment for your backyard birds is the responsible thing to do, and it will keep your birds fit and hearty. Plus it can add to your viewing pleasure to observe the spunky behavior of healthy birds in your own backyard.

- Bruce Ehresman  
Avian Ecologist

## Eagle's Eye View

Bald eagle nesting season has already begun, and once again you can watch an Iowa pair as they defend their territory and raise their young. Videos of the eagles are being posted at <http://www.youtube.com/user/ries96>

Improvements this year are the addition of sound and an infrared mode; now you can check up on the eagles day or night! They have three eggs, which will begin hatching around April 4.

Additionally, be sure to check our webpage at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/diversity/> for links to peregrine falcon, osprey, and other wildlife webcams as they come online.



The changing of the guard: parents trade incubation duty in Decorah.  
Photo by Raptor Resource Project

*Watch the eagles online!*

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ries96>



## Iowa Wildlife Action Plan: Responding to Climate Change Threats

It can be hard to appreciate how rapidly the world is warming while Iowa is thawing from another bombardment of heavy snow and frigid temperatures. But maybe you've noticed how your forsythia bush blooms sooner than a decade ago, or that vireos and warblers are showing up earlier each year. Perhaps you have read (or seen) that more southerly species like the slaty skimmer dragonfly or even armadillos are popping into Iowa's southern tier of counties. Their range expansions can remind us that even if the local effects vary so widely that Iowa has seen record-setting winters recently, it's called *global* climate change because the effects are occurring on a world-wide scale.

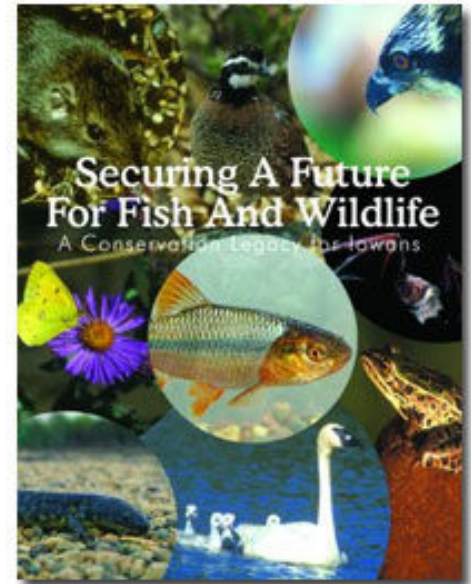
The Iowa Wildlife Action Plan was completed in 2006, and it catalogued the many threats to Iowa's wildlife, including climate change. However, the Action Plan doesn't specifically address actions Iowans should take to conserve our fish and wildlife species or natural areas in a rapidly changing climate. By 2050 (under a medium greenhouse gas emissions scenario), Iowa is predicted to average about 5°F warmer. Over the past century Iowa's precipitation has trended gradually upward\* and the medium emissions prediction tells us to expect Iowa to become 5-10% wetter still (See [www.climatewizard.org](http://www.climatewizard.org) for more information). Two unique features of this increased moisture which are expected to continue are that much of the additional rain arrives in the first half of the year, (when the ground in much of the state lies uncovered) and for it to come in more intense rain events. (For more information on Climate trends see the Climate Science Initiative Website: <http://climate.agron.iastate.edu/>)

Less obvious weather patterns are changing as well. Since the middle of the last century carbon dioxide levels in the air have increased over 20%—which could affect competition between plants, potentially changing plant community composition. Cloud cover has increased, and in the last 30 years surface wind speeds have declined, and these trends

are predicted to continue. It can be overwhelming to try to predict the intertwined effects of climate change on our region's fish and wildlife and to know the steps we can take to best help.

Members of the Wildlife Action Plan implementation committee, with the help of the DNR's Climate Change Specialist, Aaron Brees, are conducting a climate change vulnerability assessment using an index created by the non-profit organization NatureServe\*\*. We asked Wildlife Action Plan subcommittees to conduct a vulnerability assessment of the Iowa's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The assessment categorizes species according to their vulnerability to climate change: Extremely Vulnerable, Highly Vulnerable, Moderately Vulnerable, Not Vulnerable/Presumed Stable, Not Vulnerable/Increase Likely, and Insufficient Information. The northern bobwhite quail, which is presumed stable and may expand its range in Iowa, is an example of a species which we assessed. Northern bobwhites range south of Iowa and therefore the species is adapted to a higher temperature and humidity regime, and given suitable habitat could thrive in Iowa's warmer wetter climate. Iowa is also on the northern edge of the cricket frog's current range. The vulnerability index categorized the cricket frog as Extremely Vulnerable due to its limited dispersal ability, its limited tolerance of changing precipitation regimes, and most importantly, agricultural barriers to suitable habitat which will limit migration.

The vulnerability assessment will likely be completed this summer and will be used to help inform a comprehensive climate change adaptation strategy for fish and wildlife. This adaptation strategy will serve as an addendum to the Wildlife Action Plan, and will help guide wildlife conservation as we experience the effects of climate change over the coming decades. Predicting the



effects of likely environmental changes and planning for them will help increase the resiliency of Iowa's wildlife and the landscapes they inhabit. The Wildlife Action Plan and the adaptation addendum are vital steps to ensuring a continuing legacy of diversity in our state.

- Katy Reeder  
Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Manager

\*The climate trends and predictions included above were taken from an article by Dr. Eugene Takle titled "Assessment of Potential Impacts of Climate Changes on Iowa Using Current Trends and Future Projections" available at <http://climate.agron.iastate.edu/>

\*\*The climate vulnerability index for individual species is available for free download at NatureServe's website <http://www.natureserve.org/index.jsp>

To learn more about the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan, go to:  
[www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/diversity/plan.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/diversity/plan.html)

## Courtship at the Cliffs: a Falcon Field Trip

The cliffs are silent no longer! In an effort to cultivate and foster the appreciation for restored populations of Peregrine Falcons among future generations, we invited Ho-Chunk school children from Black River Falls Mission in Wisconsin and MFL-Mar-Mac school children from Marquette/McGregor area, Iowa, to the Mississippi River cliffs, near McGregor, on March 23 to hear the courtship calls and view the spectacular aerial displays of wild Peregrine Falcons as they reclaim the cliff ledge nest sites of their ancestors. It is during this time frame in late March when falcons are most vocal as they defend their nesting territories from intruders. Presenters included leaders from the Ho-Chunk Nation, Raptor Resource Project, Iowa Falconers Association, National Audubon, and the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program.

Our hope is that the Iowa Falcon Field Trip will have resounding and long term cultural and environmental influences on individual youngsters, families, and communities. Input is being

incorporated into a public event for outdoor enthusiasts to hear and see falcons back on the cliffs in Iowa next March 26, 2011, at McGregor's Landing. Some youth will remember seeing falcons for the rest of their lives, and this is good: those youth provide the best hope for the future concerning our environment.

From an enormous array of falcon effigies associated with the Mississippi flyway, it is apparent that indigenous cultures highly revered Peregrine Falcons. Modern Ho-Chunk tribal elders still retain that level of esteem and all Americans can honor falcons once again back on the cliffs. Sharing this uplifting message of hope and rejuvenation with local school systems would seem to be a prudent exercise in culturing an

environmental  
conscience for  
every  
American. Now



that these birds are back, we must ensure that they stay with us into the twenty-second century and beyond.

Our environmental challenges are indeed so immense, a disillusionment on progress can run amok through our daily lives. Better to look for those that light the way like Ho-Chunk tribal elder, Bill Payer, and Iowa falconers, Bob Anderson and Lowell Washburn, than to curse the darkness. Falcons are carrying a powerful message that efforts to remove contaminants from our environment are truly worth every penny of effort. Next year's falcon show is worth planning today.

- Pat Schlarbaum

Wildlife Diversity Technician II

*To read about peregrine falcon recovery in Iowa, go to:*

*[www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/pfalcon.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/pfalcon.html)*

## Sand Creek Woodland Savanna Bird Conservation Area

On March 3, a 31,490 acre area encompassing Sand Creek and DeKalb Wildlife Areas in Decatur, Ringgold, and Union counties became Iowa's 15<sup>th</sup> official Bird Conservation Area (BCA). The boundary of this BCA is within just a few miles of the Kellerton Grasslands BCA to the southwest and Stephens Forest BCA to the northeast. Ideally, there will one day be connecting habitat that links these three BCAs. This is truly a species rich area, with at least 112 breeding birds, and another 100 bird species use the habitat during migration. Another cool fact is that even though there will be primary focus on woodland/savanna habitat for this BCA, wooded cover is only 35%, while grassland comprises 50%. Plus, this BCA includes only 8% row crops and 4%

alfalfa – making this one of the most unique land cover combinations found anywhere in the state.

This is the second BCA to have a major focus on savanna restoration, and with the strong partnership of Iowa DNR with U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, Southern Iowa Oak Savanna Alliance, NRCS, Iowa Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and Decatur County Conservation Board, improved habitat management is in sight. Savanna birds like red-headed woodpecker, northern mockingbird, and yellow-breasted chat already exist in this BCA, and it is hoped that the state-endangered barn owl will one day be added to that list. The number of interior forest birds nesting here also is impressive and includes

wood thrush, Kentucky warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, acadian flycatcher and red-shouldered hawk. If a person is interested in observing a large number of bird species in a short amount of time, this is definitely an area to visit.

Jenni Dyar, an AmeriCorps Wildlife Diversity Research Assistant, has created a brochure for this BCA, which is available from this office. To learn more about Iowa DNR's Bird Conservation Area program, go to:  
[www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/BCA\\_index.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/BCA_index.html)

- Bruce Ehresman  
Avian Ecologist

## Special Feature: Farewells

This spring, the Wildlife Diversity Program will be losing two of its team—Program Director Doug Harr, and Furbearers and Wetland Resource Specialist Ron Andrews. We cannot let them depart unnoticed, although they may prefer it. Both have worked tirelessly for natural resource conservation throughout their careers, and Iowa's citizens and wildlife have greatly benefited from their efforts. They will both be missed.

## An Absolutely Spectacular Journey



Photo by Roger Hill

Thanks for the Great Journey and being a part of the Wildlife Diversity program. I had the pleasure and honor of being the Trumpeter Swan and River Otter Restoration Coordinator and truly enjoyed the opportunity of working with non-consumptive users of Iowa's great wildlife resources. As many of you may already know I have been the fur resource specialist for the Iowa DNR for over the past 43 years, and in that position I have worked with what I call very "avid and rabid" consumptive users of the resource. With my experience with river otter and trumpeter swan restoration, I had the same opportunity to work with very "avid and rabid" non-consumptive users of the resource. My pilot work of establishing the first interstate corridor American kestrel nesting box trail along the Cerro Gordo County I-35 corridor has spun off into over 30 other states. I truly appreciate Iowa folks that have such passion for natural resources. I like

to think that "the powerful public passion propels natural resource projects forward."

With those experiences, I have coined the expression "Habitat---The Connecting Link." The game and non-game resources and the consumptive and non-consumptive users of the resource are all connected by the creation, preservation, and enhancement of habitat. Over my 43 years with the DNR, I have often seen the two user groups get in conflict with one another over some fairly petty things, in my opinion, and during that squabbling, important habitat has been lost. So with that in mind, I think we need to set aside our differences, focus on our similar interest (which should be habitat), and we will all gain from that effort. With the public's powerful passion working together with natural resource professionals we can improve water quality, wildlife and fisheries programs considerably. By using "Habitat---The Connecting Link" in all our collective resources we can make Iowa a better state for future generations.

A couple of quick updates on river otters and swans---river otters now virtually occur over the entire state. We have received many complaints that otters are negatively impacting fisheries resources, especially in farm ponds, as well as certain important fisheries resources in streams. Fur is a Natural Renewable Resource and river otters have increased to the point that we now have had very conservative harvest of 500 otters for each of the past 4 years. We have exceeded our secondary goal of 25 wild nesting trumpeter swans in the state. In 2009, we had 40 trumpeter swan nest attempts in the state. Trumpeter swans should now be nearly

self-sustainable; something we can verify through continued monitoring.

With nearly 43 years of conservation work under my belt, it is now time for me to turn in my keys and walk towards the sunset. It has been an absolutely spectacular and enjoyable journey. I thank the Iowa DNR, the Wildlife Diversity Staff, and the consumptive and non-consumptive users of the resource for making this journey so great. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many unique folks, and the memories of all the relationships will last forever. I will continue to "Trumpet the Many Causes of Natural Resources" as a private citizen. So with that, "Thanks for the Memories" and Happy Trails to You Until We Meet Again." Look me up if you are in the Clear Lake area, and you all take care!

- Ron Andrews  
Furbearers and Wetland Resource Specialist





## Farewell to Doug and Ron

Iowa DNR is losing two of its “Big Trees” with the retirement of Doug Harr and Ron Andrews. Wildlife Diversity Program staff wish to thank both Doug and Ron for their long-term dedication to the field of wildlife conservation. Together, they have contributed over 83 years of service to this agency and to Iowa’s public. Each has left an indelible mark.

Doug has been the Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator for the last 9 years, and it has been an honor and a pleasure to serve under his leadership. Prior to joining the Wildlife Diversity crew in 2001, Doug spent 29 years as a wildlife manager in northwestern Iowa. During that time he helped add 14,000 acres of protected habitat that, in a landscape of at least 90% row crops, adds extremely valuable homes for a large number of wildlife, as well as providing more places for the public to enjoy that wildlife (especially in the Iowa Great Lakes area). Doug’s knack for protecting land continued as Wildlife Diversity Coordinator, and during this time, he played a key role in protecting an additional 4,100 acres of land, much of which now occurs in several of Iowa’s

Bird Conservation Areas (he also helped develop the BCA program) and in Iowa’s Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area.

Ron might be coined Iowa’s “Master of Species Restoration & Reintroduction.” Without his foresight and extreme dedication and perseverance, Iowa would most likely not now have self-sustaining populations of Trumpeter Swans, River Otters, and American Kestrels. In fact, it is now pretty difficult to visit any fair-sized body of water in Iowa without seeing or hearing trumpeter swans. If you drive any major highway in the state you will likely notice kestrels occupying a nest box (on the back of a highway sign) that Ron helped put there many years ago.

Throughout their careers, both Doug and Ron have been leaders in the field of Environmental Education – perhaps even before it was called that! Both deeply understand the value of helping connect people to Nature, and neither one of them has likely ever said no when asked to give a program for the public. By now, tens of thousands of kids and adults alike have had the good fortune to witness the passion these two gentlemen hold for wildlife, and it is always fun to be in the crowd when one of them is speaking. I am happy to say the enthusiasm they exude is being passed on, and today there are many conservationists in Iowa who have been influenced by them. That positive influence is certainly alive and well in today’s wildlife diversity staff, as well as in a multitude of others now working in the conservation field.

So – thanks to both of you for being there for your fellow staff and being there for the people of Iowa, and we appreciate your efforts to leave Iowa a wilder place than it would have been without you.

Thanks for making sure that the children born in Iowa, both now and in the future, will have an opportunity to experience the encouraging spring songs of chorus frogs, the beauty of birds, the grace of otters and swans, and the gentleness of a Blanding’s turtle. For those of us whom you have mentored, we will try to use what you have taught us to continue your good and worthy work, and we certainly wish you well in all your future endeavors!

*Muchas gracias, compadres!*



Ron Andrews (left) releasing an otter in 1985



Top photo: Doug speaks at the annual Saylorville Pelican Festival  
Bottom: A younger Doug (right), taken when he was a wildlife manager in northwestern Iowa

## Species Spotlight: Blue-spotted Salamander

Days after deciding to feature the blue-spotted salamander as our species spotlight for this issue, I stumbled across an article by Dean Roosa in the July 1980 issue of *Iowa Conservationist*. Although thirty years old, it reads as if it was written last week. For that reason, and because it illustrates that natural resource conservation is an on-going process, we've reprinted his article:

There are three salamanders of the genus *Ambystoma* in Iowa. By far the most common and largest is the Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) that has revolted many a mother when her fifth grader proudly brought one into the house in late spring or early fall. Another, the Small-mouthed Salamander (*Ambystoma texanum*), is a diminutive cousin that occurs in southeast Iowa. But the blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*), a near-twin to this latter species, is the month's featured endangered species.

This small species, black with bright blue spots, has been suspected of occurring in Iowa since 1937 but was not unequivocally attributed to the state until Drs. Bruce Menzel, Iowa State Univ. and Carl Goellner, Coe College, performed field and laboratory studies in 1973-1975. So far as is known this species occurs in two locations – sandy ephemeral ponds or floodplain woodlands along the Cedar River in Linn and Black Hawk counties.

These are "disjunct" populations – being distant from the major portion of its range in northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. One site is on state-owned land, the other was recently purchased by the Iowa Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. Because they are active for such a short time in spring and thus easily missed, there is a strong possibility that more populations will be found in Iowa. Fortuitously, a new freeway route missed by short distance the major Iowa habitat for this species; it could easily have been erased.

New highways, new pipelines, urban sprawl and conversion of marginal land to agricultural use all make it imperative that we find the remaining natural areas that harbor species like this salamander so their safety and protection can be assured.

To some Iowans, it is silly to show concern over anything as insignificant as a "slimy salamander"; to others, who believe we have not scratched the surface of our understanding of the value of a species, it is essential that we protect all native Iowa species irrespective of their habits, appearance or economic importance. I'm glad to be in the latter category.

A former state ecologist for the DNR, Dean is a lifetime steward of Iowa's natural resources. Today there are still only two known populations of blue-spotted salamanders in Iowa, in Linn and Black Hawk counties. This could be seen as the glass being both half-full and half-empty. On the one hand, we have thus far been unable to grow and expand the populations; on the other, we haven't lost either of the populations. Sometimes in conservation it's rewarding simply not to lose ground.

- Jenni Dyar, AmeriCorps  
Wildlife Diversity Research Assistant



## 2010 Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program



We are underway again for 2010, marking the 4th year of the MSIM program. To date we have completed surveys on over 90 public properties and many, many private properties. This year we are focusing solely on public properties, and plan to survey approximately 60 properties in 26 counties. Our seasonal aides for 2010 are: Ray Amundson (MN), Michael Barrett (WI), Ryann Cressey (IA), Kristin Fankhauser (IA), Andrew Johnson (IA), Meredith Lieurance (IA), Claire McConahay (IA), Nichole Nagl (IA), Shane Patterson (IA), Allie Rath (IA), Michael Sawyers (IA), Eric Sievers (IA), Nickolas Smith (MN), Matthew Stephenson (IA), Mark Wilson (IA), and Erik Woodhouse (IA). We anticipate another great season of interesting animal finds and even more new county records!



## Last Look

The Wildlife Diversity Program team, from left to right: Billy Reiter-Marolf (AmeriCorps), Jenni Dyar (AmeriCorps), Karen Kinkead, Stephanie Shepherd, Bruce Ehresman, Pat Schlarbaum, Doug Harr, Katy Reeder, and Paul Frese.



*A Publication of the:*



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## Events Calendar

**Monday, April 5: 7pm**  
**Cedar Rapids Audubon BBA talk\***

Where: Peoples Church Unitarian  
Universalist, Cedar Rapids, IA

**Tuesday, April 6: 10:30am**  
**Story County OWLS BBA talk\***

Where: McFarland Park, Story County

**Thursday, April 8: 7pm**  
**Quad Cities Audubon BBA talk\***

Where: Butterworth Center, Moline, IL

**Saturday, April 10: Sunrise**  
**Greater Prairie Chicken Day**  
Kellerton Wildlife Viewing Area, Ringgold  
County, IA

**Sunday, April 11: 7pm**  
**Rathbun Bird Club BBA talk\***  
Where: Continental Hotel, Centerville, IA

**Wednesday, April 28: 1pm**  
**Jasper CCB BBA talk\***  
Where: Ashton Park, Mingo, IA

**Thursday, May 6: 7:30pm**  
**Loess Hills Audubon BBA talk\***  
Where: Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, Sioux  
City, IA

**Saturday, May 8**  
**Bird-a-Thon with AmeriCorps**  
Where: Des Moines, IA  
Come out and enjoy the spring migration!  
Contact Jenni Dyar for more information  
([Jennifer.Dyar@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Dyar@dnr.iowa.gov))

**Saturday, May 22-Sunday, May 23**  
**BBA Blockbusting Weekend\***  
Where: Des Moines, Louisa, & Muscatine  
Counties

**Saturday, June 19-Sunday, June 20**  
**BBA Blockbusting Weekend\***  
Where: Dubuque, Jackson, & Clinton  
Counties

**Saturday, July 10-Sunday, July 11**  
**BBA Blockbusting Weekend\***  
Where: Marion & Warren Counties

\*For BBA questions or event details,  
contact Billy Reiter-Marolf at  
[bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org](mailto:bbacoordinator@iowabirds.org)